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What They Do

Conveyor Operators and Tenders lift and load materials onto conveyor systems. They coordinate the flow of materials while feeding items properly onto conveyor belts that move materials to or from stockpiles, processing stations, departments, or vehicles. Conveyor Operators and Tenders read production and delivery schedules and consult with supervisors to determine sorting and transfer procedures, arrangement of packages on pallets, and destinations of loaded pallets. They also stop equipment to clear jams using poles, bars, and hand tools or remove damaged materials from conveyors. Conveyor Operators and Tenders use hand tools to affix identifying information labels to products or materials.

Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators drive and control industrial trucks or tractors equipped to move materials around a warehouse, storage yard, factory, or construction site. They may work both indoors and outdoors. The work includes loading and unloading freight cars, trucks, aircraft, and ships. Industrial vehicles are usually called a forklift or lift truck and are equipped with a hydraulic lifting mechanism and forks. Workers may also drive tractors that pull trailers loaded with materials, goods or equipment within factories and warehouses, or around outdoor storage areas. Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators may refuel or recharge vehicles, check the oil and battery, and make minor repairs and adjustments, when necessary.

Tasks

Conveyor Operators and Tenders

- ▶ Inform supervisors of equipment malfunctions that need to be addressed.
- ▶ Load, unload, or adjust materials or products on conveyors by hand, by using lifts, hoists, and scoops, or by opening gates, chutes, or hoppers.
- ▶ Manipulate controls, levers, and valves to start pumps, auxiliary equipment, or conveyors, and to adjust equipment positions, speeds, timing, and material flows.
- ▶ Observe conveyor operations and monitor lights, dials, and gauges, in order to maintain specified operating levels and to detect equipment malfunctions.
- ▶ Observe packages moving along conveyors in order to identify packages and to detect defective packaging.
- ▶ Position deflector bars, gates, chutes, or spouts to divert flow of materials from one conveyor onto another conveyor.

Material Moving Occupations

- ▶ Read production and delivery schedules, and confer with supervisors, to determine sorting and transfer procedures, arrangement of packages on pallets, and destinations of loaded pallets.

Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators

- ▶ Move controls to drive gasoline or electric powered trucks, cars, or tractors and transport materials between loading, processing, and storage areas.
- ▶ Move levers and controls that operate lifting devices, such as forklifts, lift beams and swivel-hooks, hoists, and elevating platforms, in order to load, unload, transport, and stack material.
- ▶ Position lifting devices under, over, or around loaded pallets, skids, and boxes, and secure material or products for transport to designated areas.
- ▶ Manually load or unload materials onto or off pallets, skids, platforms, cars, or lifting devices.
- ▶ Perform routine maintenance on vehicles and auxiliary equipment, such as cleaning, lubricating, recharging batteries, fueling, or replacing liquefied-gas tank.
- ▶ Operate or tend automatic stacking, loading, packaging, or cutting machines.
- ▶ Signal workers to discharge, dump, or level materials.

Detailed descriptions of these occupations may be found in the Occupational Information Network (O*NET) at online.onetcenter.org.

Important Skills, Knowledge, and Abilities

- ▶ **Production and Processing** — Knowledge of raw materials, production processes, quality control, costs, and other techniques for maximizing the effective manufacture and distribution of goods.
- ▶ **Transportation** — Knowledge of principles and methods for moving people or goods by air, rail, sea, or road, including the relative costs and benefits.
- ▶ **Mathematics** — Using mathematics to solve problems.
- ▶ **English Language** — Knowledge of the structure and content of the English language, including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar.
- ▶ **Mechanical** — Knowledge of machines and tools, including their designs, uses, repair, and maintenance.
- ▶ **Reading Comprehension** — Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work-related documents.
- ▶ **Active Listening** — Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
- ▶ **Equipment Maintenance** — Performing routine maintenance on equipment and determining when and what kind of maintenance is needed.
- ▶ **Operation and Control** — Controlling operations of equipment or systems.
- ▶ **Arm-Hand Steadiness** — The ability to keep your hand and arm steady while moving your arm or while holding your arm and hand in one position.
- ▶ **Multilimb Coordination** — The ability to coordinate two or more limbs (for example, two arms, two legs, or one leg and one arm) while sitting, standing, or lying down. It does not involve performing the activities while the whole body is in motion.

Material Moving Occupations

- ▶ **Depth Perception** — The ability to judge which of several objects is closer or farther away from you, or to judge the distance between you and an object.
- ▶ **Control Precision** — The ability to quickly and repeatedly adjust the controls of a machine or a vehicle to exact positions.
- ▶ **Static Strength** — The ability to exert maximum muscle force to lift, push, pull, or carry objects.
- ▶ **Trunk Strength** — The ability to use your abdominal and lower back muscles to support part of the body repeatedly or continuously over time without 'giving out' or fatiguing.

Work Environment

Some Material Moving Workers may work at great heights or outdoors in all weather conditions. They may be exposed to harmful materials or chemicals, fumes, odors, loud noises, or dangerous machinery. However, the risk of injuries are minimized by following proper safety procedures and by wearing protective clothing, such as gloves, hardhats, and devices to protect the eyes, mouth, or hearing.

Material Movers usually work regular eight-hour shifts. However, some industries operate around-the-clock operations that may require working evening or graveyard shifts.

Some Conveyor Operators and Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators may belong to a variety of unions, such as the Teamsters, Longshoremen's, or Warehousemen's union, depending on the industry and employer.

California's Job Outlook and Wages

The California Outlook and Wage table below represents the occupations across all industries.

| Standard Occupational Classification | Estimated Number of Workers 2004 | Estimated Number of Workers 2014 | Average Annual Openings | 2006 Wage Range (per hour) |
|---|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators | | | | |
| 53-7051 | 69,400 | 81,400 | 2,510 | \$11.20 to \$19.21 |
| Conveyor Operators and Tenders | | | | |
| 53-7011 | 5,800 | 6,800 | 270 | \$10.99 to \$17.41 |

Wages do not reflect self-employment.

Average annual openings include new jobs plus net replacements.

Source: www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov, Employment Projections by Occupation and OES Employment & Wages by Occupation, Labor Market Information Division, Employment Development Department.

Trends

Employment of Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators is expected to grow at about an average rate for all occupations over the 2004-2014 period. However, opportunities will continue to arise from the need to replace the Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators who retire or leave the labor force for other reasons.

Employment of Conveyor Operators and Tenders is expected to grow at about an average rate for all occupations over the 2004-2014 period.

Material Moving Occupations

Improvements to material-moving equipment, including the increasing automation of material handling in factories and warehouses, will continue to raise productivity and limit the demand for Material Movers. Although automation will eliminate some manual tasks, new jobs will be created to operate and maintain material moving equipment.

Training/Requirements/Apprenticeships

Conveyor Operators and Tenders and Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators usually follow one of the following training paths:

- ▶ On-the-job training
- ▶ High school diploma preferred

Conveyor Operators and Tenders and Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators usually learn their skills informally, on-the-job, from more experienced workers. Although not required, many employers prefer a high school diploma.

Recommended High School Course Work

High school students interested in this kind of work should take language arts, mathematics, and automobile mechanics, as well as computer technology courses since material-moving equipment is becoming increasingly more automated.

Where Do I Find the Job?

Direct application to employers remains one of the most effective job search methods. Candidates for training should apply directly to employers who employ Conveyor Operators and Tenders and Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators.

Use the *Search for Employers by Industry* feature on the *Career Center* page at www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov to locate employers in your area. Search using keywords from the following manufacturing industry names to get a list of private firms and their addresses:

- | | |
|---|--|
| ▶ Business to Business Electronic Markets | ▶ Meat Processed from Carcasses |
| ▶ Couriers | ▶ Other Building Material Dealers |
| ▶ Employment Placement Agencies | ▶ Professional Employer Organizations |
| ▶ General Warehousing and Storage | ▶ Refrigerated Warehousing and Storage |
| ▶ Hardware Stores | ▶ Temporary Help Services |
| ▶ Home Centers | ▶ Wholesale Trade Agents and Brokers |

Search these **yellow page** headings for listings of private firms:

- | | |
|---|---|
| ▶ Air Cargo and Package Express Service | ▶ Manufacturers' Agents and Representatives |
| ▶ Conveyors and Conveying Equipment | ▶ Warehouses-Private |
| ▶ Freight Forwarding | ▶ Warehouses-Public-Commercial |

Where Can the Job Lead?

Promotional opportunities are a bit limited. However, experienced Conveyor Operators and Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators may advance to supervisory positions.

Other Sources of Information

Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals
www.cscmp.org

Conveyor Equipment Manufacturers Association
www.cemanet.org

International Brotherhood of Teamsters
www.teamster.org

Industrial Truck Association
www.indtrk.org

International Warehouse Logistics Association
www.iwla.com

Material Handling Industry of America
www.mhia.org

National Association of Manufacturers
www.nam.org

